

**Francis Schaeffer, Apologetics & Pre-Evangelism,**  
**Defusing Hostility and Making Strides in Christian Witness**  
International Society of Christian Apologetics Conference 2016  
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Abstract: Francis Schaeffer believed apologetics to be the servant of evangelism and said "pre-evangelism is no soft option." All too often, Christian Apologetics strives to make "a frontal assault on a superior force" (Greg Koukl), when in reality the force is not truly superior in thought, but only superior in numbers. Dr. Schaeffer's non-mechanical approach guides us toward not only a good apologetic, but a means to address the whole person amidst a hostile world.

**Introduction: Citadels, Trebuchets and Frontal Assaults**

As apologist, there is a tendency to be overwhelmed with the world we are confronting. Our first instinct may be to form lines and erect massive defenses. We may feel under siege in a hostile world, and we may just want to retreat to a place of safety. How do we defuse the hostility? Can it be done? Should it be done? What strides can be made in Christian witness, when a battles wages all around us, and the stakes are so high.

There is a story regularly told about Dr. Schaeffer from a conference during his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> During the question and answer time of the event, a young man stood up and asked Dr. Schaeffer what we should do. The question was filled with boxing metaphors of the church being beaten and on the ropes and ending with the question, "How do we win?" Dr. Schaeffer, answered very earnestly to the young man,

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<sup>1</sup> First hand account from Dr. Little, the custodian of the Francis Schaeffer Collection at SEBTS.

“Son, if we are fighting to win, we have lost already. We are fighting to be true to our risen Lord.” This perhaps best sets our mind for this exploration. The battle is won, yet it seems we often fight as if it is not. We often either fight in fear as though the battle is in utter jeopardy, or we retreat and barricade. In his book *The God Who is There*, Dr. Schaeffer cautions us against the citadel mentality in Apologetics:

Christian apologetics should never be restricted to guarding against attack. We have a responsibility to communicate the gospel to our generation.

Christian apologetics is not like living in a castle with the drawbridge up and occasionally tossing a stone over the walls. It is not to be based on a citadel mentality—sitting inside and saying, “You cannot reach me here.” If the Christian adopts this attitude, either in theory or in practice, his contacts with those who have accepted twentieth-century thought will stop.

Apologetics should not be merely an academic subject, a new kind of scholasticism. It should be thought out and practiced in the rough and tumble of living contact with the present generation.<sup>2</sup>

So here we must affirm what Dr. Schaeffer is saying. We can neither retreat or set ourselves in siege mode. We are in the world and not of it, but we are nevertheless here to represent Christ's kingdom as ambassadors.

The apologist and speaker, Greg Koukl, is an admirer of Dr. Schaeffer, and borrowed his concept of “Taking the Roof Off,” in his book called *Tactics*. In his book, he talks about the common tendency of Christians to “make a frontal assault on a superior force.” I would agree that this is often part of our mindset as well, and yet I would say that even more than this, we often assume an assault! We assume hostility and that a battle *must* take place. Yet that is not always how the Holy Spirit works. We as ambassadors, may be there simply to commend the new country, as it were. We in fact may be getting in the way of the Gospel, by this assumption. When utilizing Dr. Schaeffer’s approach once, I was standing

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<sup>2</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 153.

talking with a group of men and one of them asked me, “So why not survival of the fittest?” I quickly responded, “If it is just survival of the fittest, there is no basis for ethics or law.” A man who had been listening looked at me and said, “What did you just say?” He then pulled me aside and asked me “How did you come to think this way?” Then for the next two and a half hours, he asked me questions that forced me to tell him the Gospel. There was no person-to-person confrontation. The entire exchange hit a tensions with him and he wanted to know why. He was intrigued, not merely because of the answer I gave, but that the answer impacted his worldview. It impacted his life. I was thoroughly moved by the fact that he asked me over and over to explain to him the Christian concept of grace, especially since his upbringing had been in a Muslim country. He was hungry for the message and I was overjoyed to be able to tell him organically, without forcing the issue.

Another thing we do is assume that since we are often numerically in the minority, that we are also inferior in resources, when in fact, if we looked at the full strength of the Christian worldview and it’s answers, we would see that those whom we talk with are at a disadvantage in respect to truth. Thus, we should be thoroughly excited about the Christian answers. Not just that we can win, but because the truth that we hold so dear touches the ultimate realities of life. Listen to this passage from Dr. Schaeffer’s 1965 Wheaton lectures.

...there is one thing I do not understand for Bible believing Christians, and that is to be a Bible believing Christian and not be excited about the Christian answers. There is something especially horrible to be orthodox, evangelical, Bible-believing without excitement. This is a peculiar form of bad name—calling against the God that we say is there.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Schaeffer points out something very moving here. If we are not excited about the answers, we are probably not excited about the God who has provided the answers. Think about this. If I am an apologist,

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<sup>3</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *Speaking the Historic Christian Position into the 20th Century (Wheaton Lectures)*, Francis Schaeffer Studies, digitized version.

but I am not excited about the answers, I am not being true to the God I say that I believe in, the God who is there. If I, by my thoughts, actions, deeds, or behavior are professing to be a Christian apologist, and I am not acknowledging the God who is there, in my interaction with the non-believer, I am being utterly dishonest.

Now, no matter where you are in your heart as an apologist, perhaps the best way to grow more excited about the answers is to see them in how that they interact with the questions. Firstly, we need to know the roots of the objections. In a little book called *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Dr. Schaeffer writes:

As Christians, we should know the roots in order to know why those who speak and act against Christianity are doing so, and in order to know the strength of the Christian answer in each area. If we do not do this, we have little understanding of what is occurring about us. We also do not know the strength of what, as Christians, we have to say across the whole spectrum of life.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, for Dr. Schaeffer, it is not only that we are to just know the roots of their thought, but also have an apologetic that is not stagnant. It must have contact with the questions of reality. In *The God Who is There*, he writes:

The Christian should not be interested only in presenting a nicely balanced system on its own, like some Greek metaphysical system, but rather in something which has constant contact with reality—the reality of the questions being asked by his own and the next generation.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, we should not mistake this quotation for a statement against an intellectual apologetic. In his small work, *The Mark of a Christian* he writes:

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<sup>4</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Five, A Christian View of the West*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 153.

Of course, as Christians we must not minimize the need to give honest answers to honest questions. We should have an intellectual apologetic. The Bible commands it, and Christ and Paul exemplify it. In the synagogue, in the marketplace, in homes, and in almost every conceivable kind of situation, Jesus and Paul discussed Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

We cannot be mechanical in this and we cannot ignore scholarship. The true power of our system, the Christian system of doctrine, is found in earthy, organic application. When we truly understand the weight of truth that we have, as it touches reality, there are some natural results. Firstly, we should be thoroughly humbled by the truth in all our discussions, and we should have the wisdom and depth of humility to be utterly gracious. I don't mean just say the word gracious, I mean that we should be constantly striving and toiling with the aid of the Holy Spirit against our own pride and the matter of forsaking it for the cause of Christ. In an article in 1951 called *The Secret of the Power of the Enjoyment of the Lord*. Dr Schaeffer makes a powerful statement about our dealings with the non-believer and our own personal walk. That there is this connection here that should not be overlooked.

Our walk should be such that even the blasphemer must know inwardly that we have dealt fairly with him. Rightness and love must go hand in hand or there is no real power. Showing a man to be wrong is only the first step; the final aim must be to lead him to full obedience to Christ. In dealing with the unbeliever our final desire for him must be his salvation, no matter how hopeless that seems. No man is beyond the infinite grace of God.<sup>7</sup>

Note the segment of the quote, "Rightness and love must go hand in hand." Truth and love, holiness and love! These are themes throughout Dr. Schaeffer's works. Why? Listen to me closely. There has been more wrongs done in apologetics in the name of being right than the world will ever know! We have been

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<sup>6</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 191.

<sup>7</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Secret of the Power of the Enjoyment of the Lord*, The Sunday School Times. 1951.

ugly! We have been cold! Dr. Schaeffer is rumored to have said once while speaking, "Truth without love is ugly, and love without truth is compromise" and this is summarized repeatedly in his works. We must see that we have been harsh and mechanical! We are not dealing with machines! They are not machines. Dr. Schaeffer also used to say, "Man is fallen but he is not nothing!" How often have some thought that we could treat "that dreadful sinner" in such a way that is inhuman, because he is wrong? He is fallen yes, but he is not nothing! There is something which remains in man even in his fallenness. He still bears within him, the image of God. Though obscured, hardened, resisting at every turn at times, he still bears the mark of God's creation and the image of God in Himself. How dare we think we can treat the fallen man as nothing! Where is our compassion? There but for the grace of God, we too would be fallen. In his work *Escape from Reason*, Dr. Schaeffer says:

The Bible teaches that though man is hopelessly lost, he is not nothing. Man is lost because he is separated from God, his true reference point, by true moral guilt. But he will never be nothing. Therein lies the horror of his lostness. For man to be lost, in all his uniqueness and wonder, is tragic.<sup>8</sup>

If we really felt the tragedy of man's lostness, we would not be cold. We would not be so blind to our generation's questions. We would weep! When is the last time you cried for your culture like Jeremiah the weeping prophet?

Ultimately what we are talking about is something rather foundational. Before we can be effective apologists, we must first strive to honor the God who is there, and furthermore, we must also strive to honor the image of God that is in those who are there before us. Have we separated our apologetics from our humanity? If Christianity is about restoration, what does that mean to our humanity? Are we not about

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<sup>8</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 268.

participating in the restoration of what it truly means to be human? Furthermore, how can we bring people to faith and exclude their humanity? In *The Mark of a Christian*, Dr Schaeffer writes,

...the exclusiveness of the existence of the two humanities is undergirded by the unity of all men. And Christians are not to love their believing brothers to the exclusion of their non-believing fellow men. We are to have the example of the good Samaritan consciously in mind at all times.<sup>9</sup>

This thought is prevalent from his earlier article, again reading from, *The Secret of the Power of the Enjoyment of the Lord*.

We must not minimize this love we are commanded to have to all men as our neighbors, simply because there is a clear distinction in the Bible between our love to all men, as neighbors, and our love to our brothers in Christ.<sup>10</sup>

In another place in that same article, he writes,

This love for men is not to be just a banner, not just a slogan, but it should show itself in practical ways in our lives.<sup>11</sup>

What Dr. Schaeffer is promoting is not just kindness or mere notions of love, but rather a lifestyle devoted to living out truth and love before a watching world. It requires us to live a life of compassion. In his position paper to the Congress on World Evangelization, in July 1974, entitled, *Two Contents, Two Realities*, he writes:

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<sup>9</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 186.

<sup>10</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Secret of the Power of the Enjoyment of the Lord*, The Sunday School Times. 1951.

<sup>11</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Secret of the Power of the Enjoyment of the Lord*, The Sunday School Times. 1951

Christianity demands that we have enough compassion to learn the questions of our generation. The trouble with too many of us is that we want to be able to answer these questions instantly, as though we could take a funnel, put it in one ear and pour in the facts, and then go out and regurgitate them and win all the discussions. It cannot be. Answering questions is hard work. Can you answer all the questions? No, but you must try. Begin to listen with compassion. Ask what this man's questions really are and try to answer. And if you don't know the answer, try to go someplace or read and study to find the answer.<sup>12</sup>

Has the church lost her compassion? Is perhaps one of the reasons why she is seen as both harsh and legalistic and narrow minded and ignorant because she does not care enough to learn the questions of this generation? I will leave this to you to answer on your own.

### **Apologetics, The Servant of Evangelism**

A point which is deeply significant to Dr. Schaeffer is the role of Apologetics. For although Dr. Schaeffer believed firmly in the need for the defense of the faith, he believed strongly that it was not to be separated from evangelism. In Appendix A of *The God Who is There*, called *The Question of Apologetics*, Dr. Schaeffer makes the following statements

...apologetics, as I see it, should not be separated in any way from evangelism. In fact, I wonder if "apologetics" which does not lead people to Christ as Savior, and then on to their living under the Lordship of Christ in the whole of life, really is Christian apologetics. There certainly is a place for an academic study of a subject called "apologetics," as the defense and the credibility of

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<sup>12</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Three, A Christian View of Spirituality*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 415.



Christianity, but if it does not lead the students to use that material in the way I have spoken about in the previous sentence, one can ask its value.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of “apologetics” is not just to win an argument or a discussion, but that the people with whom we are in contact may become Christians and then live under the Lordship of Christ in the whole spectrum of life.<sup>14</sup>

To state it more plainly, in Dr. Schaeffer’s view, Apologetics must bear fruit in evangelism or it’s value is in question. Is there a role in confronting our culture and presenting an answer as a testimony against our culture and it’s often godlessness? Yes, but it is only after it has served evangelism first, that it should be finally to that end.

### **The Significance of Pre-Evangelism**

It seems that Dr. Schaeffer’s views on Apologetics was so firmly rooted in evangelism that he regularly used apologetic and philosophical discussion as a means to pre-evangelize. Prior to sharing the Gospel message, Dr. Schaeffer believed that there was a need to address the whole person.

The title of section five of *The God Who is There* is “Pre-Evangelism is No Soft Option.” This section is comprised of two chapters and speaks to firstly the clarification that apologetics has a defensive posture to protect the faith, but also a practical and positive application of commending the Gospel to our generation. Secondly, he speaks of the enormous importance of the communication and clarification of the concept of truth. Dr. Schaeffer emphasizes that the conceptualization of truth comes before conversion and before spirituality. At this point some have confused Dr. Schaeffer’s position with Rationalism, but simply stated, we must know what we believe, before we can believe it. Dr. Schaeffer

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<sup>13</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 187

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 153.

commented at times, “God saved the whole man.” This “whole man” therefore, to Dr. Schaeffer, included the mind. God made us moral and rational creatures. Therefore, this does not conflict with faith, since faith itself requires a trust in something that is known. The Christian faith is reasonable and worthy of being justified. It is trustworthy.

Yet, where do we begin with the non-believer? There is some opinion that we have no common ground with the non-believer, yet this position forgets that both the Christian and the non-Christian live in God’s universe and both of us were made in God’s image. This image, although fallen, is not completely obscured by the fall. We can talk, there can be communication! There is a common ground from which to speak. Again from *The God Who is There*:

...there is common ground between the Christian and non-Christian because regardless of a man’s system, he has to live in God’s world.<sup>15</sup>

From this common ground we can speak to what Dr. Schaeffer refers to as *tension* in the non-believer. In varying degrees, the non-Christian’s worldview will be in conflict with the world that is. His position stands opposed to reality as God has made it. His reason and intellect are at odds with the real world. At this point, many Christians would just adopt the disclaimer, “he is spiritually discerned” and disengage. Yet Dr. Schaeffer, insist that while he is in fact “spiritually discerned” the real world around him and his own person is speaking to him, and testifying to him of God. This is not some foreign concept, but is actually the understanding of the work of general revelation given by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 1. In another book, *Death in the City*, Dr. Schaeffer clarifies why this is so important.

Paul speaks in a special way to the man without the Bible. The man without the Bible has not suppressed special revelation (that is, the revelation in the Bible), but the general revelation given by the manhood of man and by the external world. It is then plain that the man without the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 139.

Bible holds the truth in unrighteousness; he holds some of the truth about himself and the universe, but he does not follow it to its reasonable conclusions. Thereafter, a breakdown in morality occurs.<sup>16</sup>

It is our calling to first speak to him of the tension that exist between him and the real world. We are to speak to him about who he is as man and the ultimate realities of the world around him. This task, although at first hearing, sounds easier than just giving the simple Gospel message, is actually much harder. It requires the deep compassion we have been speaking of. We must engage the one before us as a person. We must speak to them as human beings and not just projects. With dignity and respect, we must do this, and not just speaking to them as objectified lost souls. We must love the often unlovely and get our hands dirty. It takes time and patience, and it is not a soft option. After we have done so, then hopefully we have tilled up the hardened ground where the seed of the Gospel may be planted and grow. In *The God Who is There*, in the section entitled *Taking the Roof Off*, Dr. Schaeffer says something thoroughly astounding to some Christian sensibilities.

The truth that we let in first is not a dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scriptures, but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is. This is what shows him his need. The Scriptures then show him the real nature of his lostness and the answer to it. This, I am convinced, is the true order for our apologetics in the second half of the twentieth century [, now 21st century,] for people living under the line of despair.<sup>17</sup>

As it so closely relates, I would like to read a small portion of my ISCA paper from 2015:

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<sup>16</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 266.

<sup>17</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 141.

Dr. Schaeffer, being true to Paul, is advising that we first let the light of general revelation speak, by leading them to consider the truth of what is. For then, when man comes to acknowledge the tension he is in, we can then introduce him to Biblical truth, which meets his despair and need.

Dr. Schaeffer was known to have done this in practical ways, sometimes in discussion and answering questions, but sometimes even more literally. One of our group members on Facebook, Douglas James, told me of his personal encounter with Dr. Schaeffer on this. After long hours of talking into the night, Dr. Schaeffer stopped him at one point and asked him if he would do something. He asked him to go outside and look at the stars and come back in when he was ready to talk about what he had seen. We can only imagine the majesty of the starry night that he must have seen in the high mountains of Switzerland. As Douglas stood outside looking at the stars, he was amazed by their beauty, and further still, it overwhelmed him. After coming back in, Dr. Schaeffer asked him what he had seen. Douglas remarked, "I don't know, but something changed inside." While what he had witnessed was something perhaps indescribable in the moment, it had become the means to the beginning of a transformation, and it was not without truth content. Thereafter, Dr. Schaeffer was able to speak to him the explicit truths of the Gospel, adding the relevant truth content, from the Special Revelation of Scripture and thereby, he could explain the need to bow and acknowledge true moral guilt before God.<sup>18</sup>

I love this example! How arrogant are we to think that we are only voice speaking to the lost man before us! We are only one of the voices. Creation speaks, and as I referenced Dr. Schaeffer in an earlier quote, man's own mannishness is testifying against himself. We need to begin with Christianity where Christianity begins. Not with the proclamation of the Gospel, but calling the individual to acknowledge the truth of what is. Listen to these next quotes from Dr. Schaeffer, when asked about how to speak to modern man in evangelism at a L'Abri Conference in 1984, just a few weeks before his death.

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<sup>18</sup> Guinn, Dan. *The Church at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Remembering Francis Schaeffer on Inerrancy and Evangelical Identity*. *International Society of Christian Apologetics Conference 2015* Presented Saturday, April 11th, 2015, 2:15 PM.

Christianity does not begin with “Accept Christ as Savior,” Christianity begins where the Bible begins, and that is “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>19</sup>

Even if I were on an airplane and only had an hour to speak to the man or woman in the seat beside me, I would never begin with just “Accept Christ as Savior” I would talk about the difference... between a personal and impersonal universe. That’s where I would begin, even if I only had an hour, ... [I would] point out that if this impersonal universe is the final reality... then it follows quite logically and naturally that there is no meaning to life.<sup>20</sup>

The hazard that we are confronted with in the past several generations has been and still is that the church does not want to give the Gospel it’s full weight. By emphasizing only the point of conversion, the converts often times are saved into a sub-Christian sub-culture, that does not understand the totality of the Christian message. It thinks it does, but it does not. What Christianity is saying is that there is nothing outside of God’s sovereign care, and therefore, there is nothing that does not have meaning or value. Thus, in the inverse, as it pertains to apologetics, those without that understanding suffer from a degradation in every area of thought. If there is no God, the universe is impersonal and nobody’s home. If nobody is home, when the robbers come, there will be no one to protect the children from harm and theft. The enemy will come in like a thief and ravish them! Realize what will happen, people (the children) will do one of two things. They will receive the lie that no one is home and adopt total despair and abuse, as many philosophers and artist have done, or they will ignore the lie that no one is home and pretend someone or something is there, even in the very face of total despair and abuse. All the while, they slowly languish and starve. God has not left them without clues, some nourishment, and warning, but it will run out. They must accept the truth of what is. This is the emphasis in Dr. Schaeffer’s Apologetic.

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<sup>19</sup> Schaeffer, Francis A., SCHAEFFER SEGMENTS - DR SCHAEFFER ON EVANGELISM, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9DOiet4N0g> , francisschaefferstudies.org, accessed Feb, 20th, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Schaeffer, Francis A., SCHAEFFER SEGMENTS - DR SCHAEFFER ON EVANGELISM, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9DOiet4N0g> , francisschaefferstudies.org, accessed Feb, 20th, 2016.

## Dr. Schaeffer's Point of Tension and Worldview Consistency

Now understanding what we have said thus far, we cannot begin the practice of addressing the person's worldview until we first have the previous concepts down. It will do us no good to poke holes in another man's worldview if he has hardened himself against the message, because we implied by our actions that the Christian worldview is ugly and cold. Moreover, the task we are about to take on with the individual requires that we use personal discipline to speak the truth and the grace to speak it lovingly. Dr.

Schaeffer's approach requires a sensitivity, that is sympathetic to the person and yet consistent to the truth of Scripture. We are about to target and disturb the core tensions in their thoughts and beliefs.

Section 4 of *The God Who is There*, is entitled *Speaking Historic Christianity Into the Twentieth-Century Climate*, a title related to his early 1965 Wheaton lectures. Here I want to point out the titles of the chapters therein and commend them to your reading. They are 1.) Finding the Point of Tension, 2.) From the Point of Tension to the Gospel, and 3.) Applying the Gospel. One should read the full book and the Trilogy at large to get the full scope of Dr. Schaeffer's apologetic, yet here we get into the practical heart of his approach. Prior to engaging the non-believer, it is important to know where we stand, and there is much help in these chapters. We have already discussed the strength of the Christian position, but we need to also understand that while we must be humble and loving, we need not be timid. The strength of the Christian answer comes alive as we deal with the point of tension. Dr. Schaeffer explains it best in this quote from *The God Who is There*:

... No non-Christian can be consistent to the logic of his presuppositions. The reason for this is simply that man must live in reality, and the reality consist of two parts: the external world and it's form, and man's 'mannishness,' including his own 'mannishness. No matter what man may

believe, he cannot change the reality of what is. As Christianity is the truth of what is there, to deny this, on the basis of another system, is to stray from the real world.<sup>21</sup>

Non-Christian presuppositions simply do not fit into what God has made, including what man is in a place of tension. Man cannot make his own universe and then live in it.<sup>22</sup>

Note the absolutes in these past statements. Let's unpack them in a more systematic approach. Firstly, no non-Christian can be fully consistent with the real world that God has made. Secondly, no matter what man believes, unless he believes the truth, he cannot be consistent. Thirdly, since the non-Christian cannot be consistent with the real world, he is at odds with it. Fourthly, the non-Christian cannot live in the world they believe in.

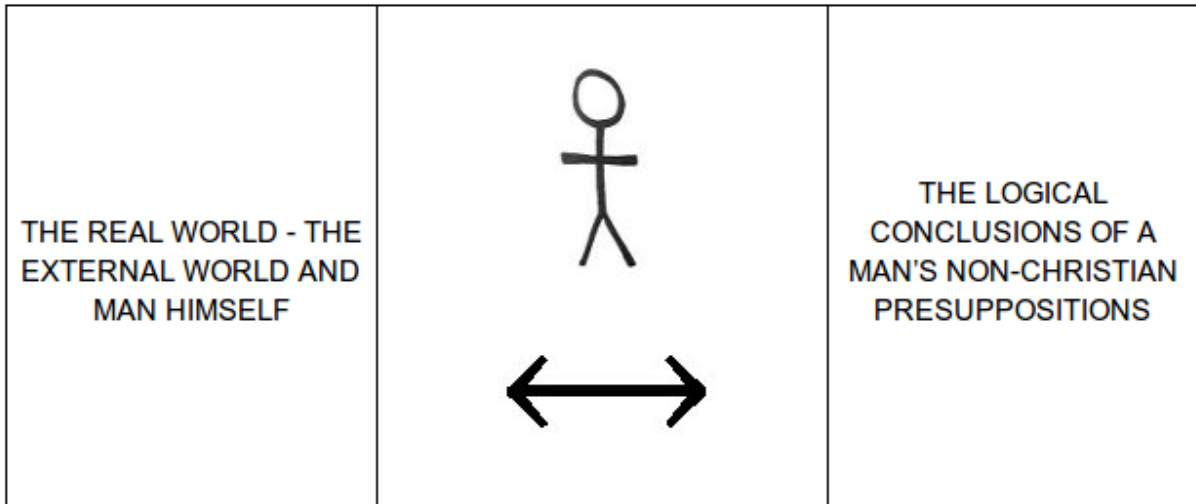
This should give us great confidence, and also great humility. It is not that the non-Christian has no truth, it is just that they do not have a truth consistent with the real world. They will have many excellent points at times. Some of them will often even be brilliant, but their presuppositions, the lens through which they see the world, will filter out the truth. Our role is to help them remove the blinders.

As we speak of consistency and the point of tension, I would like to move forward by highlighting a collection of quotes by Dr. Schaeffer that will help to expand on this concept in a much deeper fashion. We could spend an extensive amount of time on any one of these, and some points will be a review of what we have covered thus far, yet they will provide a little more insight into Dr. Schaeffer's thought. Again, I encourage you to read Dr. Schaeffer for yourself on these points, as there is much more of value in his writing, as I am not able to include everything here. Here are the points I have chosen that I feel will provide us a valuable overview:

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<sup>21</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 133.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 133.



(Chart recreated after the image in *The God Who is There*)

- **Two Consistencies:**

Every person has the pull of two consistencies, the pull towards the real world and the pull towards the logic of his system.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Schaeffer's concept of two consistencies can best be understood as two conformities to two given systems. The consistency that conforms to what is and the consistency that conforms to what the individual believes about what is. The tension will exist on a continuum, based on how honest the person is being about the implications of their position.

- **Degree of Tension:**

We have said that every person, however intelligent or lacking in intelligence, has stopped somewhere along the line towards the consistent conclusion of his own position.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 134.



Some people are prepared to go further from the real world than others, in an attempt to be more logical to their presuppositions.<sup>24</sup>

The tension Dr. Schaeffer describes differs in degree by person on the continuum and it is important to be mindful of this when we are talking to them, in order to keep from dispassionately categorizing them or dealing with them inhumanly.

- **Feeling the Tension:**

The individual will feel this tension in different ways—with some it will be beauty, with some it will be significance, with some it will be rationality, with some it will be the fear of nonbeing.<sup>25</sup>

People will feel the tension in different ways. We will need to be mindful of this so that we show the proper empathy and understanding with their struggle.

- **Targeting the Tension with Creation, Fall, Redemption**

It is important to realize how Dr. Schaeffer gets at the areas of tension. In many ways, Dr. Schaeffer is targeting the secular mind with the historic Christian position, yet with terminology shaped to address his current generation. These Schaefferism target man's overall general tension with both himself and the real world. Man's in tension with creation, with the concept of the fall, and also the means of redemption. He will hold particular views within these areas that highlight his personal tensions.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 134.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 137.

<b>Historic Christian Position</b>	<b>Creation</b>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Redemption</b>
<b>Schaeffer's Terminology</b>	"The universe and it's forms" & "The mannishness of man"	"Man's dilemma"	"What is the answer to man's dilemma?"
<b>Schaeffer's Three Bows</b>	Man must admit that he is not autonomous	Man must admit that he has true moral guilt, and that he has broken moral absolutes	Man must accept Christ as redeemer, "Christ plus nothing."

Knowing this language helps to clarify areas we can target with questions to understand the tension in the individual. We need to understand that these concepts are not merely in a vacuum, but directly touch the core questions of life. Creation: Where did I come from? Where did the universe come from? Am I alone? Fall: How do I explain man's dilemma? What is wrong with man? Why is there evil in the world? Redemption: What is the answer to man's dilemma? Where is all of this going? What is the meaning of all this?

- **Modern Deflection:**

Man today seeks to deflect this tension by saying that he is no more than a machine. But if he were no more than a machine, he would find no difficulty in proceeding step by step down the line to the logical conclusion of his non-Christian presuppositions. Man is not a machine, however, even if he says he is.<sup>26</sup>

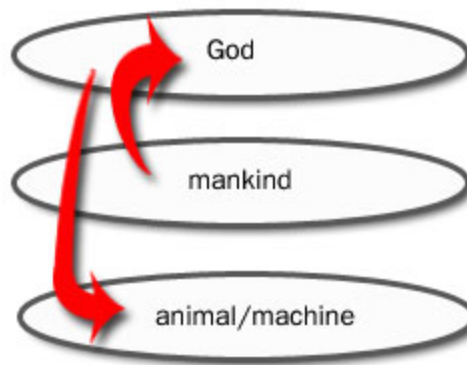
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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 137.

People will deflect the tension in different ways but usually along two lines of either animal or machine. When we hear this we need to identify this as a tension with origin and meaning.

### **Circles of Existence**

Finite sinful man, attempts to put himself in the role of God and fails. He degrades his own existence in the process.



**Chart: Circles of Existence**

This is something he teaches in *True Spirituality* in what he calls the Circles of Existence. When man tries to be his own God, he ends up degrading himself. He treats himself as either a visceral animal or a dispassionate machine. Both of these options are inadequate substitutes for what God has intended man to be. They also should be signals to us of tension.

Christians must be careful at this place. Though the Bible says men are lost, it does not say they are nothing. When a man says he is a machine or nothing, he makes himself less than the Bible's view of fallen man.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 137.

We need to recognize the way that they have degraded themselves and be mindful that we help them understand the reality of this point of view. It will be hard for them to hear, but we must lead them to the truthful and logical conclusion. Sometimes a simple question is enough.

- **Maybe Never Analyzed:**

Many people have never analyzed their own point of tension.<sup>28</sup>

People may be surprised when they are confronted with the implications of what they believe. We need to be forthright and yet carefully loving. We may encounter various emotions from them.

- **Always in Love, Through the Holy Spirit:**

We, in love, looking to the work of the Holy Spirit, must reach down into that person and try to find where the point of tension is.<sup>29</sup>

We need to be constantly in prayer, even in the moment, for the aid of the Holy Spirit to guide us in the practice of love.

- **Consistency and Communication:**

If the man before you were logical to his non-Christian presuppositions, you would have no point of communication with him. It would be impossible to have communication if he were consistent. But in reality no one can live logically according to his own non-Christian presuppositions, and consequently, because he is faced with the real world and himself,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 137.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 137.

in practice you will find a place where you can talk. He would not be where he is, suspended between the real world and the logical conclusions of his presuppositions, if he were consistent.<sup>30</sup>

Be thankful that the non-Christian is not consistent with his worldview! We should note that throughout history when men have been consistent with their worldview, the natural result has been utter tragedy. Often depression or suicide can accompany their realization. We need to be careful and prayerful when we help them begin to see their inconsistency.

One illustration comes to mind immediately when we think of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, the super man. He lives there on the slopes of the great volcano Vesuvius and he knows the mountain is going to blow up. Yet, he stands firm on the slopes. He defies death. He stands in its face and shakes his fist! However, the logical conclusion is simply this, "Not for long!" In tears we must say, "Not for long!"

- **Toward Logical Conclusions:**

When we have discovered, as well as we can, a person's point of tension, the next step is to push him towards the logical conclusion of his presuppositions.<sup>31</sup>

Dr. Schaeffer is utilizing the "negative apologetic" which is a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. The challenge for us is to carefully direct people toward the precipice of their belief. We are giving them a glimpse over the cliff. When describing this, I often utilize the illustration of the historic native American buffalo jump. Several native American tribes used to drive an entire herd of bison over a cliff by fear and provocation and then harvest them at the bottom of the cliff.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 137.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 139.

Archaeologists have discovered piles of bones over 12 feet high in some places. The hunters would surround the herd clothed with animal skins and then jump up and spook the herd. Often a lead scout runner would run out in front of them guiding them toward the cliff. By the time that the Bison at the front of the charge realized they were heading over a cliff, the herd would push them over. The lead native American scout had of course, jumped into a hole to safety. This is much like the monolithic culture we are witnessing that is driven collectively toward its natural end. Imagine for a moment, being able to guide one of those in the herd and dissuade him from the drive by giving him an advanced preview of the cliff he is about to rush over.

- **Not a Game:**

As I seek to do this, I need to remind myself constantly that this is not a game I am playing. If I begin to enjoy it as a kind of intellectual exercise, then I am cruel and can expect no real spiritual results. As I push the man off his false balance, he must be able to feel that I care for him. Otherwise I will only end up destroying him, and the cruelty and ugliness of it all will destroy me as well. Merely to be abstract and cold is to show that I do not really believe this person to be created in God's image and therefore one of my kind. Pushing him towards the logic of his presuppositions is going to cause him pain; therefore, I must not push any further than I need to.<sup>32</sup>

Again the emphasis here is having proper respect to the person as made in the image of God. We are "pushing them off their false balance" as Dr. Schaeffer says. We dare not add any gamesmanship here.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 139.

- **Not about being Right:**

The whole purpose... is not to make them admit that we are right in some personally superior way, nor to push their noses in the dirt, but to make them see their need so that they will listen to the gospel.<sup>33</sup>

We have already covered this to some degree. It cannot be about winning arguments, it's about helping them see their need.

- **Taking Blows:**

In the midst of our attempts to press our case, we must be ready to receive blows as well. The more he is a true twentieth century man the more important it is, if you wish to see him become a Christian, that you should accept the blows of the questions in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the name of truth. On the other hand, keep pressing him back, for he must keep answering questions, too.<sup>34</sup>

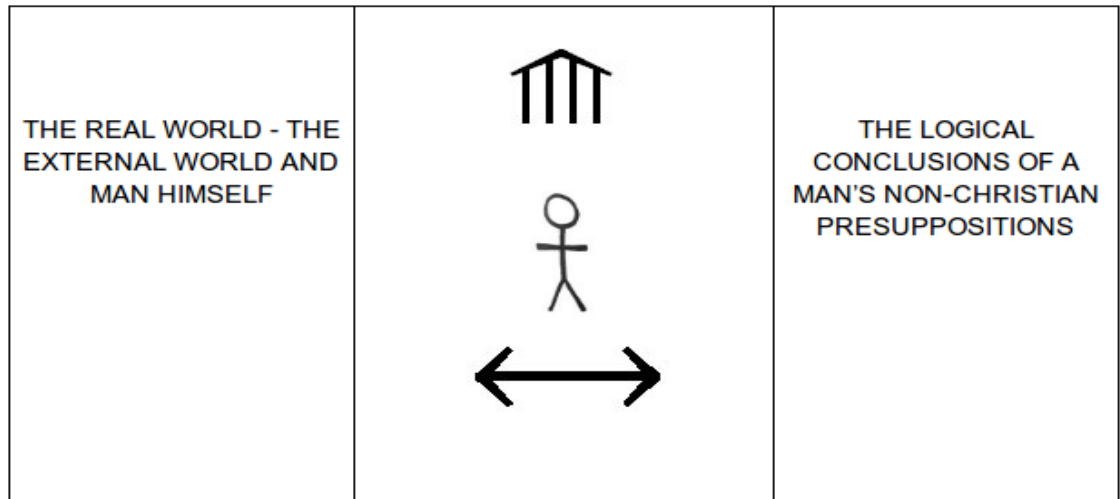
Are we willing to sacrifice our pride and the desire to be right for them? Are we willing to withstand their blows, their criticisms? What about their anger? What about their ridicule. Our character is on trial. Will we be found wanting?

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 140.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 140.

- Taking the Roof Off:



Every man has built a roof over his head to shield himself at the point of tension.<sup>35</sup>

... the roof is built as a protection against the blows of the real world, both internal and external.<sup>36</sup>

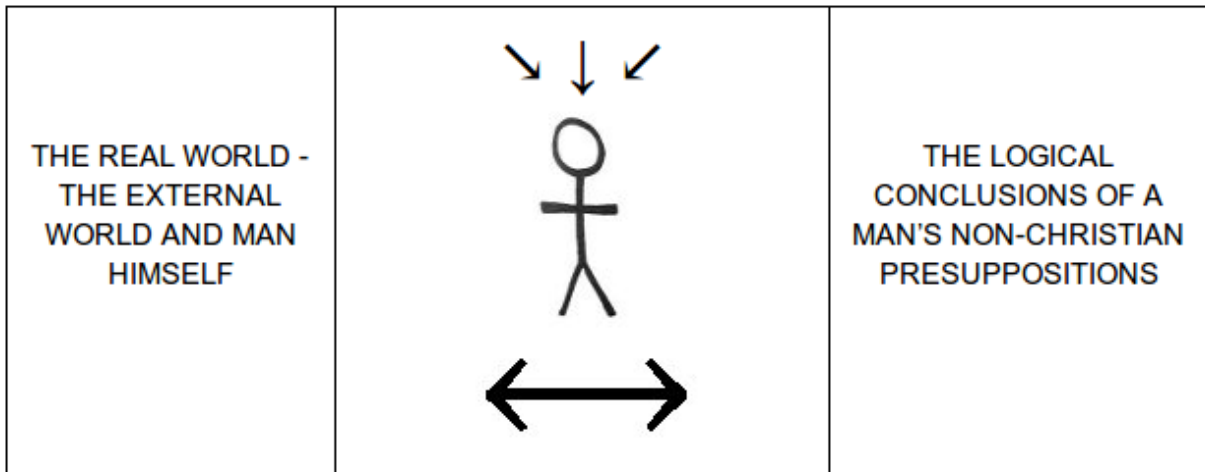
It is not hard to see that men have crafted ways to shield themselves from their inconsistency. Remembering that their shelter exist somewhere along the continuum from the real world and the logical ends of their belief system will help. At some point along this line, he has stopped short of following his belief system to its logical end. Instead of taking it to it's absolute pessimism, he has taken a leap. At this point is the primary point of tension where the roof rest. When we remove it, the real world that God has made, namely of General Revelation, can speak to him.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 141.





The Christian, lovingly, must remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is, to beat upon him. When the roof is off, each man must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is.<sup>37</sup>

It is unpleasant to be submerged by an avalanche, but we must allow the person to undergo this experience so that he may realize his system has no answer to the crucial questions of life. He must come to know that his roof is a false protection from the storm of what is; and then we can talk to him of the storm of the judgment of God.<sup>38</sup>

- **Empathy and Integrity Through a Dark Path:**

We must have faced the question, "Is Christianity true?" for ourselves.<sup>39</sup>

Men must know that with integrity we have faced the reality of the dark path they are treading.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 145.

This finally is the most important instruction to the apologist. We need to be intellectually honest. We need to have thought through and tried to empathize with the nonbeliever's questions. When we encounter a new one, we will learn to automatically categorize it into its class of questions. Yet, this does not mean it is not serious and worth our study. May we learn to tread this dark path, so that we may shed light for a fallen world.

- **The Watching World and the Final Apologetic**

Lastly, it would be remiss of us to mention Dr. Schaeffer's apologetic without mention of what he called, The Final Apologetic, which is formulated from two specific verses. Firstly from John 13:33-34, where here Christ gives the commandment to love one another, so that people would know whose children we are. Notice I said whose.

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **By this all people will know that you are my disciples**, if you have love for one another." (John 13:33-35 ESV, bold added)

Then also, from the pastoral prayer of our Lord, Jesus.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, **so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** (John 17:20-21 ESV)

Have we ever considered that our love for one another is an evidence to the world of the calling and work of Christ, sent by the Father? Listen to this quote from *The Mark of a Christian*:

...unless true Christians show observable love to each other, Christ says the world cannot be expected to listen, even when we give proper answers. Let us be careful, indeed, to spend a lifetime studying to give honest answers. For years the orthodox, evangelical church has done this very poorly. So it is well to spend time learning to answer the questions of those who are about us. But after we have done our best to communicate to a lost world, still we must never forget that the final apologetic which Jesus gives is the observable love of true Christians for true Christians.<sup>41</sup>

observable love and oneness among true Christians exhibited before the world must certainly cross all the lines which divide men.<sup>42</sup>

This is an important point. The Schaeffers found themselves regularly involved in cross-cultural ministry. As they sat at the table with people from all over the world and of various backgrounds the demonstration of “observable love” in their family, and between them and other believers present was constantly on display. What is our demonstration?

### **Conclusion**

While we have attempted to analyze Dr. Schaeffer’s methodology in Apologetics and pre-evangelism, to move us toward strides in Christian witness, we should recognize that what we have covered here is not exhaustive or systematic. There is so much more that could be explored, especially as it pertains to cultural apologetics and worldview studies. There have been many attempts to categorize Dr. Schaeffer’s

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<sup>41</sup> Schaeffer, A. Francis, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church*, Westchester, IL, Crossway Books. 191.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 191.

apologetic, yet so many, in my opinion, often have done so at the expense of laboring to grasp his deep adherence to true spirituality and the sound theology in his approach. What is perhaps more significant is not the classification, but the nature in which he sought to deal compassionately with people from pre-evangelism to conversion. His example of laboring in love with the questions of his generation and his extensive toil with the tensions of searching individuals is a high mark for apologist as well as evangelist, teachers and counselors. Schaeffer is indeed not to be venerated, but he is most definitely to be emulated, as his example sought to magnify the character of Christ in Apologetics to the ends of evangelism and the acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ. May our witness be strengthened by this most important example in our time and all glory be to Christ alone.